

West  
of the  
Thirties

DISCOVERIES  
AMONG THE NAVAJO  
AND HOPI

Edward T. Hall

DOUBLE DAY  
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*This book is dedicated to Lorenzo Hubbell, second-generation Indian trader, friend and mentor, who grew up as Spanish, Navajo, Hopi, and Anglo-American. Sharing the real-life experience of four cultures, he set me straight as to the true meaning of accommodation and understanding.*

without really knowing what had happened. For those of us who had seen a number of these dances, we too would leave slowly, comparing notes like ballet critics.

During Snake Dance time, it was a common experience for me to be stopped by curious tourists wanting to know all about the dance. They had an unquenchable thirst for answers to such questions as "Are the snakes rattlesnakes?" "If so, how do the dancers keep from being bit-ten?" "If they are bitten, what keeps them from being poisoned by the venom?" "Why aren't the dancers afraid of the snakes?" "Why snakes?" I had trouble answering these questions. There seemed no way to give an answer so that there would be agreement between the statement a Hopi might make and one the average white person would understand. This principle applied to the totality of Hopi culture.

This was not merely a problem among tourists. When I was on the reservation, a man who had been the Oraibi School principal since the time of the Oraibi split had convinced some Hopi men to lay claim to unused Bear clan land so that they wouldn't have to walk so far—up to twenty miles a day—to till their own clan fields. The white man's logic, of which he was quite proud, was that since the fields were not being used, it was a senseless waste for them to remain fallow while the villagers of other clans were walking miles and miles to till their more-distant fields. The consequences of his white man's logic were horrendous. With all the best intentions in the world and convinced that he was doing the right, natural, logical, and just thing, the school principal in one stroke had managed to cut at the core of Hopi institutions on which everything else rested. In the simplest and most direct terms he had, without authorization or consent, donned the robe of